

# Budget Tidbits... just the facts

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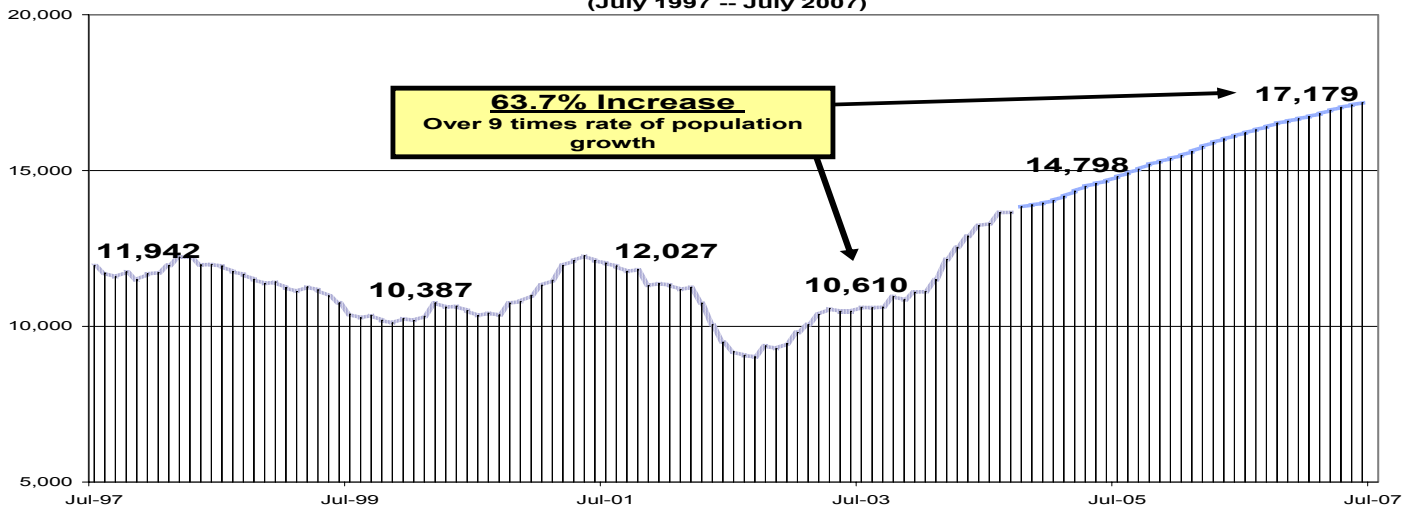
## Budget Brief #8: General Assistance Unemployable (3/1/05)

- General Assistance Unemployable provides state-funded cash grants and health insurance for people temporarily unemployable due to a short-term injury or illness. *Federal coverage is available to people with a long-term incapacity.*

### A. GAU is one of the Most Rapidly Growing Budget Programs.

- GAU (cash grants and medical) is projected to cost \$245 million in 2005-07 – more than the combined current state funding for WWU, EWU and Evergreen State College.

### **General Assistance Unemployable Caseload** (July 1997 -- July 2007)



### B. Washington is Out of Step

- Washington is one of only 15 states with state-only funded assistance for the temporarily unemployable and the only one in the Northwest. Spending is 6<sup>th</sup> highest in the country.<sup>1</sup>
- In recognition that federal coverage is available for the long-term unemployable, several states time-limit benefits for the “temporarily unemployable.”<sup>2</sup> Washington does not.

### C. Time-Limiting Eligibility Could Produce Substantial Savings

- Time-limiting eligibility for this temporary assistance program could save \$84 million, while still enabling long-term unemployable individuals to receive federal coverage.<sup>3</sup>

### Bottom Line

Designed to be temporary assistance, GAU is run as an entitlement with no benefit time-limit. To fulfill the program’s intent and prevent abuse, should restrictions apply?

1. Urban Institute, “State General Assistance Programs 1998” (June 1999) (citation is from tables 2, 3 & 9; 19 states run state-only funded GA programs, four of which – Oregon, Arizona, Kansas, and Rhode Island – provide assistance only to those presumptively eligible for federal SSI coverage).  
2. *Id.*, p. 13.  
3. Source: Fiscal Note on P2SSB 6017 (2004) – savings estimate is likely conservative, given increased caseload projections since January 2004.